

Tribal Communication Committee Highlights from 12.12.07 Meeting

The Tribal Communication Committee (TCC) held its third meeting on December 12, 2007, in Sacramento. In attendance were eight persons affiliated with Tribal organizations, along with staff from the Department of Water Resources and facilitators from the Center for Collaborative Policy. The meeting's objectives included the development of a communications plan for Tribal outreach as part of California Water Plan (CWP) Update 2009; and the preparation of an agenda for the Tribal Plenary on January 28, 2008.

After reviewing the day's agenda, the TCC went through a series of updates concerning

- an introductory brochure
- the Water Plan's Strategic Plan Elements
- the possibility of an eventual meeting with DWR and the State Water Resources Control Board to discuss Tribal water rights
- the opportunity for Tribes to obtain state funding for flood prevention and mitigation via the FloodSAFE program, and
- the overlap between Tribal lands and the federal Burned Area Emergency Response Teams' reports on the Southern California wildfires, where flooding is now a risk

The TCC then turned to communication planning, with the aim of identifying mechanisms for Tribes to provide input on statewide water policy issues. It was noted that three persons affiliated with Tribal organizations sit on the Water Plan's Advisory Committee. The TCC then discussed mailing lists, including the importance of broad-based participation and possible existing lists, and agreed to develop a single main mailing list for its purposes. The TCC also discussed other important mechanisms for communication, including newsletters, public notices, press releases, and the Water Plan E-News. Lastly, the TCC discussed sources of funding available to help Tribal persons cover travel expenses involved in attending CWP Update 2009 meetings, including the Tribal Plenary. Members and staff agreed to follow-up on funding for members of both recognized and non-recognized Tribes.

The TCC then began developing a draft agenda for the Tribal Plenary. Members decided to devote sessions to educating Tribes about the basic purpose and importance of the Water Plan; to discussing why involvement in the Water Plan is important from a Tribal perspective; to educating participants about the basic of water governance in California and how Tribes can get involved; and to providing Tribal input on Water Plan Resource Management Strategies. The TCC also had a lengthy discussion about the centrality of Tribal water rights, and the need for Tribes to have an authentic voice in planning and recognition of their sovereignty as it affects water in the State; about the new opportunity for genuine Tribal engagement in water planning in California; about the linkages between water and health, housing, and economic development; and about different possible outcomes of their work, including the development of a formal consultation mechanism, a Tribal Water Summit in 2009, and Tribal findings and recommendations in the Water Plan Update 2009. The TCC will continue to develop its communication plan in subsequent meetings. Three members of the TCC also agreed to brief the CWP Update 2009 Advisory Committee, which meets on Wednesday, December 19, on their work-to-date.